



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Town Clerk (860)441-6640
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Meeting Minutes

Town Council

Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Peter J. Bartinik, Jr., Heather Sherman Bond, Catherine Kolnaski, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., John F. Scott, Paulann H. Sheets, James L. Streeter, and Elissa T. Wright.

Tuesday, January 17, 2006

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

I. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Mayor Harry Watson.

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Deputy Town Clerk Janet Downs, and Office Assistant Elga Concepcion.

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Sheets, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Wright

Members Absent: Councilor Scott

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Salute to the Flag was led by Cindy Barry, Assistant Director for Health Education and Community Relations at Ledge Light Health District.

III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS & MEMORIALS

2006-0022 Proclamation Recognizing Give Kids A Smile® Day

Read

Mayor Watson read the Proclamation.

2005-0319 Proclamation Recognizing Devin Waddicor

Read

Councilor Streeter read the Proclamation.

2005-0321 Proclamation Recognizing Mentor Month

Read

Councilor Kolnaski read the Proclamation, and Mayor Watson presented it to Dana Parfitt.

Mrs. Parfitt noted that currently there is a waiting list for Groton students waiting for a mentor. She also stated that there is a mentor training program coming up on January 6 at West Side Middle School. Residents may contact Human Services to enroll in the mentor program.

By consensus, the Town Council agreed to proceed with new business following Responses to Citizens' Petitions, Comments and Concerns.

IV. CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

State Representative Edward Moukawsher, 48 West Elderkin Avenue, is concerned about the Town cutting back on the Poquonnock Bridge Community Policing. He cited the example of New London and other cities that have experienced an increase in crime subsequent to cutting similar programs.

Rolf Glasfeld, 146 Cedar Road, Mystic, summarized an email he had sent to the Town Council in which he opposes the motion to delay revaluation by one year.

Jack Sebastian, 4 East Shore Avenue, Groton Long Point, stated that although he is not speaking as a representative of the RTM, he is representing District 8 and feels that it is "safe to say" that the majority of taxpayers in District 8 would prefer to see a one year delay in revaluation.

Bobbi Jo Cini, 316 Groton Long Point Road, supports a one year delay in revaluation. She asked the Town to look at departmental budgets. Mrs. Cini feels that the Town should look for ways to reduce the Public Works budget.

Jim Musante, 195 Seneca Drive, supports a one year delay in the revaluation. He feels that there should be a better balance between commercial, industrial, tax-free, and residential properties as these are main sources of Town income.

Joe Baril, 26 Saint Joseph Court, RTM member for District 1, discussed how a 5% budget cut may result in services being eliminated by Parks and Recreation and Human Services. Mr. Baril supports a one year delay in revaluation.

Genevieve Cerf, 17 Crescent Street, Groton Long Point, RTM member for District 8, thanked Town staff for being cooperative in providing revaluation data. She supports a delay in the revaluation and made a presentation on its impact on homeowners.

Jasjit Bindra, 171 Neptune Drive, suggested that the Town raise the mill rate this year, postpone the revaluation, and address the problem at the State level. He feels that the process needs to be more equitable.

Sally Whitney, 52 Division Street, an Assistant Town Clerk, requested a review of the Ordinance for Veteran's Property Tax Exemption. She spoke in favor of allowing the budget to maintain the same level of service as this year's budget. Mrs. Whitney stated that she was not in favor of delaying the revaluation.

John Sutherland, 32 Neptune Drive, supports the proposal to delay implementation of the revaluation. He is concerned that a revaluation in 2005 would cause a substantial reduction in taxes to Pfizer and other corporations which would have to be offset by an increase in residential taxes. In his data analysis, Mr. Sutherland noticed tax reductions in some of the residential properties owned by Pfizer, Inc.

David Cruthers, 5 Prospect Street, Groton Long Point, is in favor of postponing the revaluation for at least one year and would like the Council to re-examine the way in which land values are calculated.

Ed Ettinger, 174 Cedar Road, Mystic, is opposed to postponing the revaluation. His major concern is that the postponement will mask the issue of cost controls and productivity enhancements by and within the Town and school cost centers.

Sue Sutherland, 32 Neptune Drive, supports the proposal to delay implementation of the recent revaluation. She feels that if the revaluation had been uniform across all properties, there would not be major differences in property taxes. Mrs. Sutherland stated that many corporations will see big tax reductions so the burden to pay for this will go to residential taxpayers.

Roger Chericoni, 1 Tautog Street, Groton Long Point, noted that he is a full-time resident and that part-time residents are a good thing since they don't send children to school or utilize as many Town services.

Gordon Fader, 41 Middlefield Street, believes that a total tax reform is needed for the entire State, with particular attention to personal income. He is in favor of the one year delay in revaluation.

Jack Rogers, Clubhouse Point, would like the Council to table the revaluation for at least one year. He encouraged the Council to go to the State so changes will be made and feels that the current system is "broken".

Stephen Alfield, 47 Sommersett Drive, is upset over the increase in his property assessment. He feels that the "little guy" needs to be able to pay his taxes and noted the increase in cost of electricity.

Jim Young, 27 Clifford Court, Mystic, noted that he doesn't believe that the State will change the tax structure within one year and is opposed to delaying the revaluation.

V. RESPONSES TO CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Councilor Kolnaski wanted to correct a statement made by one of the speakers in which the additional cost of delaying the revaluation until 2006 was stated to be \$100,000. Councilor Kolnaski noted that her information stated an additional cost of \$213,200 which will probably make a difference in the mill rate.

In response to Councilor Bartinik's question, Sally Whitney replied that she had submitted her notes to the Town Clerk regarding the Veterans' tax exemption.

2006-0026 Review of Veterans Exemption

REVIEW OF VETERANS EXEMPTION

Mayor Watson requested that a new referral be submitted to the Finance Committee to review the Ordinance for Veterans Property Tax Exemption.

X. NEW BUSINESS

2005-0307 Acceptance of Open Space at Fleet Bank Subdivision

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING OPEN SPACE AT FLEET BANK SUBDIVISION

WHEREAS, the Fleet Bank Subdivision, Winding Hollow Road, was approved on June 13, 1995, and

WHEREAS, the Groton Planning Commission on July 8, 2003 recommended acceptance of an open space parcel in the Fleet Bank Subdivision for park, open space, and recreational purposes, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town of Groton accepts the parcel of open space designated on the Fleet Bank Subdivision plan, and that this matter be referred to the Representative Town Meeting.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Adopted and Referred to the Representative Town Meeting, due back on March 8, 2006.

The motion carried unanimously.

2006-0012 Implementation of 2005 Revaluation

RESOLUTION TO DELAY IMPLEMENTATION OF PROPERTY REVALUATION

WHEREAS, the Town Council has considered the financial effects on homeowners that are expected to occur from the implementation of the October 1, 2005, Grand List, in the FY 2006-07 taxes, and

WHEREAS, the Connecticut General Statutes, at Sec. 12-621, allow a municipality to decline to effectuate the 2005 revaluation until the 2006 assessment year, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Groton Town Council directs that the revaluation be delayed until the 2006

assessment year.

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Sheets, that this matter be Adopted.

Responding to Councilor O'Beirne's inquiry, the Town Manager clarified that the 2006 revaluation will be a new revaluation which will include five years instead of four years.

Councilor Sheets strongly supports this resolution, and reminded citizens that the Town has the authority under State statute to postpone the revaluation. As a result of the postponement in the revaluation, her husband who is the owner of their home will experience a postponement of a \$1,579 increase in taxes.

MOTION TO AMEND

A motion to amend the Resolved portion of text to read, ". . . that the Groton Town Council directs that the revaluation be delayed until the 2006 assessment year." was moved by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski. The amendment came at the suggestion of the Town Manager. The motion to amend carried unanimously.

Councilor O'Beirne noted that there are numerous problems with the 2005 revaluation which need to be fixed. He will support postponement of the revaluation until 2006 and would like to see a committee formed of people who have completed in-depth analysis of the revaluation.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 5 - Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Sheets and Councilor Wright
Opposed: 3 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Kolnaski and Councilor Streeter

A brief recess was taken at this point in the meeting.

Councilor O'Beirne left during the recess.

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Sheets, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Wright

Members Absent: Councilor O'Beirne, Jr. and Councilor Scott

2006-0013 Colonel Ledyard School Roof Replacement Grant

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO FILE AN APPLICATION WITH THE STATE FOR A GRANT FOR ROOF REPLACEMENT

WHEREAS, the Town Council must authorize the Board of Education to apply for a grant for the project to replace portions of the roof at Colonel Ledyard School, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, the Town Council authorizes the Board of Education to file an application with the State Department of Education for a grant to partially offset the cost of replacing portions of the roof at Colonel Ledyard School.

A motion was made by Councilor Wright, seconded by Councilor Streeter, that this matter be Adopted.

Councilor Wright summarized the Finance Committee meeting minutes of January 10, 2006. This resolution authorizes the BOE to apply for what is anticipated to be a 50% grant to offset the cost of roof repairs at Colonel Ledyard School. The total cost of this project is estimated at \$250,000.

The motion carried unanimously.

2006-0014 Resolution Referring Colonel Ledyard School Roof Replacement to Board of Education

RESOLUTION REFERRING PROJECT FOR ROOF REPLACEMENT AT COLONEL LEDYARD SCHOOL TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND AUTHORIZING SCHEMATIC PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

WHEREAS, the Groton Board of Education has determined that a partial roof replacement at Colonel Ledyard School is necessary, be it

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education is authorized to act as the building committee for this project, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education is hereby authorized to employ architectural services for preparation of schematic drawings and specifications for a project to undertake said roof replacement.

A motion was made by Councilor Wright, seconded by Councilor Sheets, that this matter be Adopted.

Councilor Wright noted that it was under the recommendation of the Town Manager and the School Superintendent that the BOE be authorized to act as the building committee for projects of this nature.

The motion carried unanimously.

2006-0017

Reappointment of Theodore Hespeler to Community Development Advisory Committee

RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING THEODORE HESPELER TO THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED, that Theodore Hespeler, 21 Tower Avenue, is hereby reappointed to the Community Development Advisory Committee for a term expiring 2/7/09.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

2006-0018

Reappointment of Eunice Sutphen to Inland Wetlands Agency

RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING EUNICE SUTPHEN TO THE INLAND WETLANDS AGENCY

RESOLVED, that Eunice Sutphen, 120 Cedar Road, Mystic is hereby reappointed to the Inland Wetlands Agency for a term expiring 12/31/07.

A motion was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Wright, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

2006-0019

Reappointment of Edward Martin to Shellfish Commission

RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING EDWARD MARTIN TO THE SHELLFISH COMMISSION

RESOLVED, that Edward Martin, 17 Woodland Drive, is hereby reappointed to the Shellfish Commission for a term expiring December 31, 2010.

A motion was made by Councilor Bartinik, Jr., seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously.

2006-0020

Appointment of Brian Shirvell as Regular Member to the Zoning Commission

RESOLUTION APPOINTING BRIAN SHIRVELL TO THE ZONING COMMISSION AS A REGULAR MEMBER

RESOLVED, that Brian Shirvell, 290 High Street, Mystic, currently an alternate member, is appointed as a regular member to the Zoning Commission for a term ending 12/31/08.

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Sheets, that this matter be Adopted.

Councilor Sheets expressed thanks on behalf of the Council and the Town to the people appointed to serve on these commissions.

The motion carried unanimously.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

a. Approval of Minutes**2006-0021 Approval of Minutes (Town Council)**

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Meeting of January 3, 2006 are hereby accepted and approved.

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

b. Deletions from the Town Council Referral List**2005-0275 Voting Machines for 2006 Election**

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action on the Consent Calendar.

2005-0307 Acceptance of Open Space at Fleet Bank Subdivision

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2006-0013 Colonel Ledyard School Roof Replacement Grant

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2006-0014 Resolution Referring Colonel Ledyard School Roof Replacement to Board of Education

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2006-0012 Implementation of 2005 Revaluation

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2006-0017 Reappointment of Theodore Hespeler to Community Development Advisory Committee

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2006-0018 Reappointment of Eunice Sutphen to Inland Wetlands Agency

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2006-0019 Reappointment of Edward Martin to Shellfish Commission

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2006-0020 Appointment of Brian Shirvell as Regular Member to the Zoning Commission

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

c. Special Trust Fund Contributions**2005-0322 Special Trust Fund Contributions**

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPECIAL TRUST FUNDS

RESOLVED, that the Town Council hereby accepts contributions to the Town as follows:

Will Langdon - \$100.00 - DARE

Marlene Terry Ziegler (in memory of Mrs. Lois Olson - \$36.00 - Library Discretionary

Anonymous - \$100.00 - Social Services Discretionary

Joan Butler - \$150.00 - Social Services Discretionary

Christ United Methodist Church - \$92.00 - Social Services Discretionary

Eastern Point & Mary Morrisson School Community - \$112.00 - Social Services Discretionary

Groton Board of Education Employees - Social Services Discretionary

Groton Lions Club - \$2,000.00 - Social Services Discretionary

Carla Henschel - \$50.00 - Social Services Discretionary

Gerald Kercher - \$80.00 - Social Services Discretionary

Elaine Kipp - \$100.00 - Social Services Discretionary

Nancy McKay - \$30.00 - Social Services Discretionary

Mistick River BPW - \$50.00 - Social Services Discretionary

Grace Musante - \$50.00 - Social Services Discretionary

Janiss Rudolph - \$100.00 - Social Services Discretionary
St. Andrew Presbyterian Church - \$75.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Suisman Shapiro - \$1,000.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Joseph Wallace - \$100.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Madelyn Hammel - \$10.00 - Recreation Discretionary
Jennifer Larson - \$5.00 - Recreation Discretionary
Ronald Chase - \$30.00 - Social Services Discretionary
First Church of Christ Congregational - \$100.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Helena Ilvento - \$20.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Victor Lawrence - \$25.00 - Social Services Discretionary
E. C. Leclercq - \$100.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Local United Network - \$250.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Thomas Meyer - \$10.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Mystic Medical Group - \$400.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Mary Ellen Robeson - \$9.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Barbara Sawyer - \$1,200.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Various Donations - \$2,023.12 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program
City of Groton - \$369.61 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program
Eddie Bauer - \$100.00 - Dog Pound

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

Passed The Consent Calendar

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to adopt the Consent Calendar, including all the preceding items marked as having been adopted on the Consent Calendar.

The motion carried unanimously.

VII. COMMUNICATION REPORTS (Other than Committee Reports)

a. Town Councilors

Councilors received numerous communications regarding the revaluation. Several Councilors attended the joint meeting of the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA), staff, and Stonington officials on January 12.

Councilor Kolnaski attended the swearing-in of new police officers and other recognitions on January 5. She also attended the Permanent School Building Committee meeting at which time they discussed the plans and cost estimates which will be on the Board of Education (BOE) agenda. Councilor Kolnaski attended the BOE meeting on January 9 at which time they approved the plans and cost estimates of the two elementary schools and Fitch High School. She attended a meeting of the Ledge Light Health District Board of Directors on January 12.

Councilor Bartinik received emails regarding Councilor Streeter's discussion at the last Town Council meeting involving adult material at the public library.

Councilor Bond attended a D.A.R.E. presentation on January 11. She commented on the great job Police Officer Saunders did as the presenter.

Councilor Wright received a phone call regarding the budget, cost containment, and Town expenditures.

Councilor Streeter received emails regarding budget issues. He spent many hours returning calls this past weekend and wanted to apologize to anyone he was not able to call back. Councilor Streeter noted his decision not to respond to emails.

Councilor Sheets explained how she computed a \$4 per capita figure in relation to expenses associated with a 2006 revaluation. She noted that the additional revaluation cost of \$213,200

(as reported in the Town Council Weekly Status Report of January 12, 2006) will need to be examined closely.

Mayor Watson testified in Hartford on January 4 to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to keep the Town on the priority list for our wastewater treatment plant upgrade. He attended the swearing-in ceremony of new police officers on January 5.

The Mayor attended a forum on homelessness in Southeastern Connecticut at the United Way on January 6. He attended the Eagle Scout ceremony for Devin Waddicor on January 8.

Responding to Councilor Bartinik's inquiry regarding the Council of Government's (COG) \$25,000 donation to the New London homeless shelter, Mayor Watson stated that he will discuss this matter and other budget issues at the COG meeting on January 18.

b. Representative Town Meeting

Deputy Town Clerk Janet Downs noted that the RTM met on January 11 and will meet again on February 8.

c. Clerk of the Council

The Town Clerk's office received emails regarding the revaluation. These emails were addressed to Councilors and copies were distributed to the Councilors as appropriate.

d. Town Manager

Town Manager Mark Oefinger reminded citizens that the Economic Development Strategic Planning Committee will be meeting on January 19 to review the draft strategic plan. He would like to receive input from the Town Council regarding this plan on or about February 7.

Mr. Oefinger noted Internet protection at the Groton Public Library as reported in the Town Council Weekly Status Report of January 12, 2006. He noted that he attended the DEP Public Hearing concerning the WPCA and believes the Town will remain on the list which should be finalized on or about March 1.

The Town Manager briefly discussed the additional cost which the Town will incur by delaying the revaluation until 2006 as noted in the Town Council Weekly Status Report of January 12, 2006.

e. Town Attorney

No report.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Community & Cultural Development - Chairman Scott

No meeting; no report.

b. Economic Development - Chairman Bond

Councilor Bond stated that there was a meeting on January 10 in which all attendees received a draft copy of the report from the Economic Steering Committee.

c. Education/Health & Social Services - Chairman Kolnaski

No meeting; no report.

d. Environment & Recreation - Chairman Sheets

Councilor Sheets read the minutes of the meeting held on January 10, 2006 which are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

e. Finance - Chairman Wright

Chairman Wright summarized the minutes of the meeting held on January 10, 2006 which are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

f. Personnel/Appointments/Rules - Chairman O'Beirne

On behalf of Councilor O'Beirne, Councilor Sheets read the minutes of the meeting held on January 10, 2006, which are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

g. Public Safety - Chairman Streeter

No meeting; no report.

h. Public Works - Chairman Bartinik

Councilor Bartinik noted that there was a brief meeting held on January 10, 2006 at which the snow removal policy was on the agenda. Attendees were informed that staff will discuss this matter and get more information.

i. Committee of the Whole - Mayor Watson

Mayor Watson noted that there was a Committee of the Whole meeting on January 10 at which department heads gave budget presentations concerning budget reductions. The Mayor met with Representative Cathy Cook, Representative Edward Moukawsher and Representative Lenny Winkler to discuss legislative issues before tonight's Town Council Meeting.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilor Bartinik requested that the Noank Bus Ordinance be addressed. The Town Manager stated that this matter will be placed on next Tuesday's COW agenda.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

2006-0027 Mystic Transportation Issues

MYSTIC TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

Councilor Bond requested a new referral be submitted to the Economic Development Committee.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 9:37 p.m. was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk

*Elga Concepcion
Office Assistant*